

**Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)**

**Monday, October 19, 2015**

**Alabama Industrial Development Training Center**

The AIACC met on Monday, October 19, 2015, at the Alabama Industrial Development Training Center. The meeting was called to order by Chair, Senator Cam Ward. Also in attendance were Council members: Brooke Bowles, Lucian Cronkite, Sally Davis, Greg Carlson, Doris Hill, Myra Jones, Melanie Jones, Whitney Meade, Myriam Peralta, Sarah Ryan, Todd Tomerlin, and Karen Willis. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Russell Green on behalf of Stephanie Azar, Sarah O'Kelley on behalf of Fred Biasini, Tina Sanders on behalf of Thomas Bice, Karen Jenkins on behalf of Cary Boswell, Sondra Holland on behalf of Nancy Buckner, Vera Hendrix on behalf of John Mascia, Yada Horace on behalf of Jim Ridling, Dianna Tullier on behalf of Jeana Ross, and Laurie Eldridge-Auffant on behalf of Don Williamson.

The minutes from the July 13, 2015 meeting were approved and adopted.

Chairperson Ward shared his comments regarding the latest legislative session, particularly relating to budget matters. In the past on the Council has received funding primarily for the Coordinator position, which came from the Education budget and the General Fund budget. The legislature passed the education budget relatively quickly in the regular session, unanimously, which is very rare for Alabama. The General Fund budget was not approved until the second special session. At the end of the day, the Council was one of the few agencies that was level-funded and didn't receive any cuts. Funding was maintained at \$60,000, coming from the General Fund and \$63,900, coming from the Education fund for a total of \$123,900 which covers the State Coordinator position and AIACC small projects. The only agencies that received level-funding, for the most part, were Corrections and Medicaid.

The State Coordinator, Anna McConnell welcomed everyone to the meeting. She pointed out several new faces in the group. There are five new proxies representing some of the agencies. She pointed out as well, that some members have retired, such as David Savage, from ADRS. Dawn Ellis retired from ADPH. The Department of Insurance representatives have changed positions. At DHR, Erin Wofford has changed jobs and is now at the Learning Tree. And, from Education, Lisa Highfield has changed positions and is now at Pike Road Schools. After brief introductions of the new attendees, Anna pointed out the 2016 meeting dates which are listed on the agenda.

## New Business:

Accessibility Committee: Brook Bowles spoke for the group, which advocates for choice and access to services. They met in the spring and prioritized their objective of developing a comprehensive list of providers throughout the state. They are still in the process of developing the list. Another objective prioritized was to make a presentation on accessibility to help people understand how they can access services. Joe Carter from Glenwood and Brooke were able to develop an accessibility presentation, which they shared with the Autism Society of Alabama Chapter Leaders in July. They would be delighted to present this to anyone who needs the information. They have also worked with publicly funded organizations to increase accessibility and choice for individuals with ASD. They were able to meet with Commissioner Boswell of ADRS and ADRS is now in the process of hiring the first Autism Liaison for the Birmingham location of the Vocational Rehab Services office. This will be the pilot Autism Liaison. The goal, if all goes well, is that all VR offices in the state will have an Autism Liaison. The Committee will meet again before the end of the year and make some new priorities.

Accountability Committee: Whitney Meade stated there are no significant updates to share. They are in need of meeting, at which they will focus on looking at the availability of evidence-based services and finding those providers and exactly what services they are offering.

Funding & Finance Committee: Greg Carlson states there are no new updates other than the legislative session.

Public Awareness Committee: Melanie Jones shares that the Committee has been very active. They have already met a lot of their goals. First of all, the ASA is focusing this year on three signature programs: Autism Friendly Alabama; Respite and Library Resources, all of which tie in with the committee. In reference to the Autism Friendly campaign, Bama and Melanie have spoken with Regions Bank, who is excited to get on board. They will start small, with Birmingham being a pilot area. Their contact at Regions Bank wants to take it to a regional level. They are also getting inquiries from other businesses. The Committee is still supporting First Responder Training sponsored by ASA. They have four planned for this year. Through grants, they are also going to be providing financial assistance for Respite Care for Families. Lastly, reference material will be going into one Library in each county, to keep their Autism Resources up to date.

Regional Centers: Sarah O'Kelley reminded everyone that the Regional Assessment Project, at this point, involves five universities: the University of Alabama, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Auburn University and The University of South Alabama. At this stage there has been some funding to gather information about service providers in each region and surveys/assessments of services regarding access and availability. Currently each group is conducting an updated regional assessment, which will be a partial update of the 2008-2009 Autism Needs Assessment, of their area looking at the resources, strengths and weaknesses in their areas, to set the stage for when the funding is available. The University of Alabama at Birmingham and the University of Alabama are both working through university systems in terms of hierarchy and the funding pieces, but they are making progress. The University of Alabama at Huntsville has started identifying staff and moving on their project. The University of South Alabama has made some progress and is hoping to meet all of their goals in terms of looking at resources, by end of the year. Auburn University has been very active with Doris Hill, and has pulled together a lot of the information that has been requested for the infrastructure.

Bylaws: Anna asked the group if there were any individuals interested in leading the Bylaws Committee in light of Kim Hill's retirement. If no one else wants to fill the role, Sarah Ryan will step in. In review, Anna will be getting in touch with those who are nearing the end of their first term. She will ask if those individuals are interested in serving a second term.

#### Other New Business:

Michael Myers, with the Office of General Council of the Alabama Department of Education, spoke on the proposed revisions to their administrative code pertaining to due process hearings and how the system is initiated start to finish. The revisions are listed on their website for review and public comment. Anna also sent a link to the proposed rule changes in the last e-news that she sent. Some of the revisions include limiting hearings to a length of three days, that hearings must be conducted on consecutive days, and the manner in which Hearing Officers purge/promote joint stipulations of facts and exhibits, to make the process more about the children and less about logistics. They have also increased their staff from three Hearing Officers to four, without the need for additional funding.

Paige McKerchar provided an update on the Behavior Analyst Licensure Board. The licensing board statute is officially currently under revision to fix the holes it has that prohibit them from carrying out the licensure process (e.g., spending authority and a separate account). The

revisions will go into this spring's session. When those changes are approved, they can begin licensing.

#### Member Updates:

Anna McConnell - Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network has emergency respite funds available. Forms are available on their website for application. Members out of UCP Huntsville are available to speak at events you might have, and are able to offer \$250 respite vouchers to parents who attend meetings at which they speak.

Anna asked if there were any updates on the social story to be used with the Autism ID. The story has been being used for those that use the ID. The application has now been finalized, so that the professional signing is attesting only to the fact that there is documentation showing a person has a diagnosis, not that the professional actually made the diagnosis.

Binders are now being distributed with information from AAP, Learn the Signs Act Early, and screening tools, etc. Fourteen of those are going out to pediatricians, and Help Me Grow will be collecting data on these.

Sesame Street is developing a new character with autism that should be coming out in November. There should be more resources on-line at [sesamestreet.org/autism](http://sesamestreet.org/autism).

Autism CARES grantees have put out a Collection of Recommended Resources from grantees that can be found on-line at:

[https://www.aucd.org/docs/Ben/CARES2015\\_AutismIdentificationResources.pdf](https://www.aucd.org/docs/Ben/CARES2015_AutismIdentificationResources.pdf).

Anna also gave an update on the Autism Speaks Transition Toolkit as well as announced the National Autism Center's National Autism Standards, Phase 2 is now available.

Russell Green with Medicaid shared that in the past month or so the Alabama chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics requested Medicaid cover procedure code 96127 which is Emotional and Behavioral Screening. Earlier in the year, it came out that CMS was covering the procedure, but Alabama Medicaid was not. Effective October 1, Alabama Medicaid will cover emotional and behavioral screenings, as well as the developmental screenings they have in the past. Also in the past several months, they had an inquiry from the parent of an autistic child seeking ABA type services. Medicaid was very responsive, leadership got involved and basically

assessed what the child needed and directed the parent accordingly. However, the provider that was helping the parent and child was not an Alabama Medicaid provider. It is important that Alabama Medicaid providers are utilized so they can bill and receive payment from the department.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Next meeting: Monday, January 11, 2016.

Recording Secretary

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C. S. Weldon

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